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LETTER DATED 8 JULY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Further to my letter of 18 June 1998, annexing the Croatian draft text for an agreement between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia proposing a permanent solution to the security issue of Prevlaka (S/1998/533), I have the honour to inform you of the following additional views of my Government.

Croatia welcomes the findings of the Secretary-General, as recorded in his report on the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (S/1998/578), that the situation in the Prevlaka area remains stable and that tensions on both sides of the border have been substantially reduced. In particular, Croatia appreciates the Secretary-General's call to the parties to make use of the current situation and to engage in substantive talks towards the resolution of the Prevlaka issue.

Croatia is encouraged by the first positive public reactions to its proposal by the Montenegrin authorities. Croatia views these reactions as conducive to a more constructive approach for improving cooperation and resolving the remaining bilateral issues. Such an approach contributes to building a realistic framework for negotiations, based on principles of international law, especially the principle of inviolability of international borders.

Croatia looks forward to proceeding expeditiously with bilateral negotiations with a view to resolving the security issue of Prevlaka permanently. In this regard, it welcomes the recently expressed preparedness of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to embark immediately upon negotiations in respect of this matter, as expressed in the letter of the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Momir Bulatović, to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/593).

The letter nominally supports bilateral negotiations, but it also implies negotiations on changing internationally recognized borders. This approach, which disregards the principle of the inviolability of borders, remains unacceptable not only to Croatia, but also appears dangerous to security and stability prospects elsewhere in the region. Furthermore, it stands in sharp

contrast with the relevant Security Council resolutions on the Prevlaka issue adopted under the agenda item entitled "The situation in Croatia", which reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia. In any new resolution on this topic, the Security Council should be even more explicit, making it quite clear that Prevlaka is exclusively a security and not a territorial issue.

Allegations contained in the letter about the character of violations of the United Nations zones in Prevlaka are in sharp contrast with the Secretary-General's report, which is an objective and reliable source. The occasional entry of civilians into the United Nations monitored area does not constitute a threat to the population of Herceg Novi and Boka Kotorska. The efforts of the local population merely reflect their impatience to resume their normal activities of fishing and farming now that the situation is stable and that tensions on both sides of the border have been substantially reduced.

My Government has formally embarked upon the resolution of the Prevlaka issue in good faith and in a transparent manner. The resolution process would doubtless be fostered further if the Security Council, in the course of its forthcoming consideration of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP), provided an efficient incentive for expediting bilateral negotiations. Such a step would emphasize the interests of the international community in achieving much needed sustainable stability in this part of Europe and the release of United Nations resources to areas of more pressing concern.

May I ask for your kind assistance in distributing the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dr. Ivan ŠIMONOVIĆ
Permanent Representative